



THE ROLE OF CHAIR OF GOVERNING COUNCIL

Briefing Pack – May 2017

Introduction

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) is going through a period of exciting change. The recently appointed Vice-Chancellor, Professor Joanna Price, is shaping a new strategy for the RAU, and is building a new team to further enhance the University's long standing and well recognised contributions to higher education for the land based sector, and to progress in the fields of agriculture, rural, property and the built environment; the food supply chain; agribusiness; and equine science.

Appointing a new Chair of Governing Council is key to this process. He or she will have a major influence on the progress of this distinctive, small, specialist University, with the opportunity to build upon its strengths and adapt its traditional position in the land-based sector.

The RAU has been at the forefront of agricultural education since its foundation as the Royal Agricultural College (RAC) in 1845. Today, the University has some 1,200 students from over 40 different countries studying at its historic campus at Cirencester in the heart of the Cotswolds.

The Chair of Governing Council has a pivotal role to play as the University launches its new strategic plan in 2018. S/he should understand the multiple business drivers that underpin the strategy, have extensive Board experience and will ideally have chaired the Board of an Institution of comparable size and complexity.

An influential role in the agri-food/environment or land management sector would be a great advantage as would be a strong personal commitment to higher education and empathy with the values, aims and objectives of the RAU. A key advantage is experience in business/finance since improving financial sustainability will be key to the RAU's future success.

The University

The RAU offers undergraduate, masters and doctoral programmes with a focus on combining academic rigor with practical application across a range of academic disciplines. Courses are managed and taught by experienced staff and specialist consultants, many of whom are still engaged in professional practice.

Students can choose from more than 30 different degrees, at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Well-established undergraduate degrees include Rural Land Management, Real Estate, Agriculture, Food Production and Supply Management, Business and Enterprise, Environment, and International Equine and Agricultural Business Management. In some subjects, there is also the opportunity for students to progress from Foundation to BSc Honours degrees. At postgraduate level the RAU offers a range of taught MSc programmes.

The University offers a stimulating learning environment designed to address the changing needs of the employment market by combining high academic standards with practically applied research, enhanced by strong industry links. As a result, the RAU produces leaders and innovators across the land based industries.

A Brief History

The University, known as the Royal Agricultural College (RAC) until 2013, was established in 1845 with The Earl Bathurst as President. Funds were raised by public subscription with much of the support coming from the wealthy landowners and farmers of the day. The Earl Bathurst leased a site to build the College, and construction in the Victorian Gothic style began in April 1845. Queen Victoria granted the Royal Charter to the College in the same year, and Sovereigns have been Patrons ever since, visiting the University in every reign. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales became President in 1982. The University motto is 'Arvorum Cultus Pecorumque'; a quotation from Virgil's Georgics meaning 'Caring for the Fields and the Beasts' and this is a major part of the University's core values today.

From its early days, the College was staffed with innovators and pioneers, and made a considerable impact on farming practice and agricultural science. The first modern degree programme, started in 1984, was a BSc (Hons) degree in Rural Land Management. The RAC had been independent of government control from its foundation until 2001, when it first received funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), allowing it to widen access to its courses to students of all backgrounds.

In 2013, the Privy Council awarded the College full University Status, in recognition of its provision as a higher education institution.

Current Financial and Commercial Details

The RAU's annual income is approximately £18m. The majority of this income comes from tuition fees, with other significant contributions from commercial services and funding council grants. Income from other, mainly non HE sources (including the University's farms), accounts for the remaining amounts (around £1.5m).

Annual expenditure is around £17.2m, with staff costs of approximately 200 FTE accounting for just under half of this (at £8.5m or 49 per cent). Other operating expenses cover a range of non-pay areas totalling approximately £7.5m. Interest charges and depreciation of around £1m leave the University with a planned surplus of income over expenditure of around £1m. This planned annual surplus for the year is retained within general reserves.

Details of the RAU's income and expenditure accounts (2015/2016) are available at [Annual Report and Financial Statements](#).

Further detail about the University can be found at www.rau.ac.uk.

NB: A summary of the University's activities, strengths and subject specialisations is provided in the Appendix.

Governing Council

Current Membership:

Mr Nick Stace – Interim Chair of Governors
Professor Michael Osbaldeston - Vice-Chair of Governors
Mr Mohamed Amersi - Independent Governor
Mrs Alison Bernays - Independent Governor
Prof Patricia Broadfoot - Independent Governor
Mr Ian Cooper - Independent Governor
Prof Jonathan Kydd - Independent Governor
Mr Alex Lawson - Independent Governor
Mr Chris Musgrave - Independent Governor
Mr Colin Pett - Independent Governor
Mrs Jean Roberts - Independent Governor
Mr James Townshend - Independent Governor
Mrs Theresa Chapman - Company Secretary

In Attendance:

The Earl Bathurst – Vice-President
Mr Simon Pott – Vice-President
Ms Scarlett Crew - Staff Representative
Mr Will Manley - Staff Representative
Student Representatives x 2
Prof Jo Price - Vice-Chancellor

For further details and biographies, see the Governance pages on the RAU website:
<https://www.rau.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/membership>

The Role of the Chair

Post Title:	Chair of Council
Reports To:	Governing Council
Location:	Cirencester
Term:	Three years (renewable for a further 3 year term)
Responsibility for:	Leadership of Governing Council

Scope of the Role

The Chair is responsible to the University's stakeholders for the leadership of the Council and ultimately for its effectiveness. As Chair s/he should promote the wellbeing and efficient operation of the Council and its committees, ensuring that members work together effectively and have confidence in the procedures laid down for the conduct of business.

The Chair is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Council establishes oversight and discusses those issues which it needs to, and dispatches its responsibilities in a business-like way. S/he must ensure that committees and individuals to which responsibility has been delegated in the interests of securing efficient process and decision making, report back appropriately on their discharge of those delegated responsibilities.

The Chair should take particular care that all members of the Council observe the principles of behaviour in public life (the "Nolan Principles"), which embrace selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

The Chair also has a major responsibility to ensure, along with the Vice-Chancellor and the senior executive team; that the RAU builds the appropriate connections and partnerships and is effectively represented with its stakeholders, extensive alumni network and other external bodies.

Relationship to the Executive

Through leadership of the Council, the Chair plays a key role in the business of the University, but should not be drawn into the day-to-day executive management. For the Council to be effective there must be a constructive and challenging working relationship between the Chair and the Vice-Chancellor as the executive head of the institution, with both parties recognising that their roles are formally and constitutionally distinct. The relationship should be mutually supportive, but must also incorporate the checks and balances imposed by the different roles.

It is good practice for the Chair, the Vice-Chancellor and the Company Secretary to work closely together within the legal framework provided by the articles and instruments of governance and the Funding Council's Financial Memorandum.

The Chair will be formally and informally involved in the process for the recruitment of Council appointments to the University and is responsible, on behalf of the Council, for reviewing the performance of the Vice-Chancellor on a regular basis and for making recommendations to the Remuneration Committee accordingly. The Chair will also review the performance of individual members of the Council and will have input into the review of the performance of the Company Secretary.

Key Responsibilities

Ensuring that:

- The proceedings of the governing body are conducted in as open a manner as possible
- There is an appropriate skill set on the Council
- There is an orderly succession of members of the Council
- All independent members of the Council when taking up office, have a full induction and are fully briefed on the terms of their appointment and made aware of the responsibilities placed on them for the proper governance of the University
- Opportunities for further development for all members of the Council are provided regularly in accordance with their individual needs, and that appropriate financial provision is made for support
- To act as an ambassador on behalf of the University and the Council

Skills and Experience

- Relevant professional expertise and knowledge in matters relevant to successful operation of a large, diverse organisation. Financial and commercial acumen is essential and experience of risk and performance management
- Knowledge of and empathetic towards current challenges facing the agri-food-environment and land management sector and of higher education. However, experience of HE management/governance is not essential
- Experience of chairing meetings and bringing matters to a satisfactory conclusion
- Awareness of the modern regulatory environment, so that legitimate scrutiny and accountability are respected and effectively discharged

Leadership Behaviours

The Chair will have a strong personal commitment to the land based sector and higher education and have empathy with the values, aims and objectives of the RAU. S/he will also share the University's vision and aspirations as detailed in the new Strategic plan, as well as understand the multiple academic and business drivers needed to underpin this.

Acts as a role model:

- Sound judgement and judiciousness
- Ability to deal with conflict in a constructive manner
- Skills of networking, influencing and advocacy
- Political awareness
- Ability to establish good working relationships with a diverse range of people (staff, students, other lay members of the Council and its committees, alumni and stakeholders)
- Understanding of the economic, social and political dynamics of the Gloucestershire region
- Demonstrable commitment to equality and diversity
- Actively listens and acts on feedback

Shapes the future:

- Helps articulate the vision for the RAU and is able to bring other Governors on board by creating a compelling story which excites and engages at all levels
- Is constantly seeking best practice and applying it in a way which is appropriate for RAU
- Makes strategic choices, which are commercially sound and understands the need for robust financial modelling

Develops great people:

- Nurtures talent within the Council
- Develops the Council to deliver higher performance

Delivers results:

- Drives accountability at all levels
- Successfully achieves against targets
- Makes effective decisions taking into account appropriate data and views of others
- Plans effectively and ensures self and others follow things through to completion

Time Commitment

The nature of the role requires a commitment of time which is a combination of that required for the discharge of formal tasks but also informal support and contact which are critical to a proper discharge of the responsibilities of the position. The exact time commitment is therefore difficult to quantify but is approximately 25 days per annum. The following is a guide to the more formal tasks.

Formal tasks include:

- Chairing meetings of the Council (6 formal meetings per year plus 1 'away day')
- Membership of the Nominations Committee
- Membership of the Remuneration and Staffing Committee
- Membership of the Finance and Strategy Committee
- Plus ceremonial occasions

The Chair of Governing Council may also need to be available at short notice in unforeseen circumstances and may exceptionally be called on to chair an Emergency Committee of governors.

The Chair may be required to participate in the final stages of University procedures with regard to staff and student discipline.

There is no remuneration associated with this role but the Chair will be able to reclaim all travelling and similar expenses incurred in the course of University business and have access to administrative support via the Governance Team, if and when required.

Delegation

It is usual for the Council to grant delegated authority to the Chair to act on its behalf between meetings. Such action taken under delegated authority may consist of business that would not have merited discussion at a Council meeting (such as the signing of routine documents) or detailed implementation of matters already agreed by the Council.

The Chair should be careful not to take decisions by Chair's action where it is inappropriate to do so, and not to exceed the scope of the delegated authority granted by the Council.

Conflicts of Interest

It is central to the proper conduct of public business that the Chair should act and be perceived to act impartially, and not be influenced in his/her role as Chair of Governing Council by social or business relationships. Along with all other members of the Council, the Chair must submit details of any outside interests to the Clerk to the Council (DVC&COO) for inclusion in the register of interests.

Key Relationships

- Governors
- Vice-Chancellor and Company Secretary
- Senior executive team
- Shareholders
- Staff
- Students
- Alumni
- Businesses and employers
- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
- Chairs of other University Councils
- Donors and other supporters

Legal Status of the Role

The post holder will be a Company Director of the Royal Agricultural University, a company limited by shares, company number 99168. S/he will also be a trustee of the Royal Agricultural University registered charity number 311780.

Application Process

If you are interested in applying for this transformational role, please send:

- Your up-to-date CV and a covering letter explaining your interest and motivation for applying, along with how your experience and qualifications suit you for the role
- Details for three referees

Please forward to the People Team, Royal Agricultural University, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 6JS or via email to people.team@rau.ac.uk.

Informal enquiries can be made to the Chairman of the Search Committee and Deputy Chairman of Council, Professor Michael Osbaldeston michael.osbaldeston@cranfield.ac.uk or to the Vice-Chancellor Professor Jo Price jo.price@rau.ac.uk.

Closing date for applications is Friday 30 June 2017.

APPENDIX

The RAU's Activities and Disciplines

RAU Strengths

- The RAU was the top ranked small specialist Institution in the 2016 People and Planet University League. We were one of a very small number of Universities to score 100% for 'Education' and Sustainability is now fully embedded across the curriculum. It was the winner of the 'Sustainability' category at the prestigious Guardian University Awards 2016 in March and won two categories at the Green Gown Awards 2016 in October (Best Newcomer and Enterprise and Employability)
- The University has maintained high employability figures across the board according to the national survey organised by the Higher Education Statistics Agency. On average over the past five years, 96% of RAU undergraduates are in employment or further study within six months of leaving the University
- Student Enterprise at the RAU is recognised nationally as being a leader in the field; it was the only Small Specialist Institution to be shortlisted for the very prestigious Duke of York's Student Enterprise Award and several of our graduates have recently been recognised for their business successes
- The RAU was ranked in the top 10 in the UK for academic and facilities spend and degree completion, according to the Complete University Guide 2016. The RAU was placed sixth in the UK for facilities spend because of investment in a range of in student facilities, including sports, careers services, health and counselling etc.
- The University has a collegiate and supportive atmosphere with a strong welfare and support network

International

The RAU has strong international links and academic partnerships, particularly in Africa, China and South East Asia. Approximately 8% of the student population at the RAU comes from overseas (non-UK and EU). With students from around 45 different countries on campus, the RAU is a diverse and vibrant international community. Recruiting overseas students is important to the RAU, not only because this enables the University to diversify its income streams, but also because it enables it to foster a truly international environment for all students, both home and overseas.

Teaching and Learning

The University's courses are managed by experienced staff, many of whom are involved in consultancy, near-market research and training activities, both in the UK and overseas. Members of staff are engaged in a range of scholarly activities publishing papers, text books and reports to a variety of private and government clients. This expertise is integral in designing, teaching and supervising the taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as well as research degrees at masters and doctoral levels.

Agriculture

The RAU's agricultural curriculum provides a clear response to the current and future issues which affect the consumer, technology, and the economic and political landscape. The University continually monitors the factors which stimulate the need for a sustainable, socio-economic agricultural management policy in the UK, EU, and globally. Graduates are equipped to take on the challenges ahead, and to create a more sustainable future.

A range of agricultural courses are on offer, which provides a bespoke education to prepare students for the dynamic and highly competitive global market. In addition, students can benefit from up-to-date skills based training at the Rural Innovation Centre.

The underpinning of the RAU's success is based on an extensive network of relationships with farm businesses and rural practitioners, from which technical knowledge is practically applied to coursework and exams. Academic staff are experts within their fields, with the knowledge and experience to debate current issues, form partnerships with agricultural enterprises, progress our Farm491 agri-tech initiative, and conduct research trials on the RAU farms.

Food Supply and Management

Worth around £97 billion and employing more than 3.5 million people in the UK alone, the agri-food sector is thriving. The sector is also the key to providing safe foods in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner to a growing world population on an ever-decreasing cultivatable land footprint. The effects of changing consumer demands, government edicts about dietary diseases such as obesity, diabetes and heart attacks, and natural disasters mean this fast-moving industry requires confident, reliable, enthusiastic employees with an excellent understanding of food production, and the skills to manage complex supply chains on a local and a global scale.

Business and Enterprise

All students undertake a work placement as part of their programme, which allows them to gain valuable experience and see how what they are learning is used in practice. All honours degrees have dual accreditation from the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), so in addition to their degree students receive a separate qualification from the Institute. The CMI qualification enhances the CVs of RAU students, and makes them more attractive to potential employers. The University runs an award-winning Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Programme which has supported many students in starting their own successful businesses. The programme offers “First Steps Funding” to help students test their business idea, and provides help and guidance at all levels of business start-up. Entrepreneurial skills are highly prized by employers who seek to recruit graduates who can demonstrate their creativity and will help the company to evolve and develop.

Environment

The RAU offers students a fantastic opportunity for students to learn how to manage the countryside, wildlife, and rural heritage. The key aim is to equip students with the necessary knowledge and understanding, alongside those practical and leadership skills, that employers are looking for. The RAU offers a range of foundation degree pathways allowing students to develop interests in a particular subject area, with options to progress onto a bespoke top-up degree.

The RAU takes full advantage of the great contacts it has with industry, through guest speakers, field visits, and work-based placements. The University farms, along with the Rural Innovation Centre at Harnhill and a neighbouring forestry estate, provide an ideal platform on which to train students in the various vocational skills required by industry such as use of machinery (chainsaws, brush cutters, ATVs, and tractors) and ecological survey work (vegetation and mammal surveys). In essence, the University works to deepen the understanding of the living and physical environment, and promote working in partnership with land managers to contribute to sustainable management for the future.

Equine Management and Science

After 25 years of experience the RAU has discovered that a mixed approach to education produces the most employable dynamic graduates. As such e courses deliver a blend of equine science and business, and an international perspective along with agriculture based subject matter. Transferable skills are delivered in science and business through a 20-week industry placement. This equips students for managerial positions in commercial companies across all aspects of the equine industry.

Based in the Cotswolds, the RAU is ideally positioned to take full advantage of world leading sporting venues such as Cheltenham Racecourse, Gatcombe Park and the Badminton Estate to name but three. Due to the close links we have with these, students gain a first-hand appreciation of the business dimensions and the day to day running of equestrian sporting events. Courses are delivered by a team of research active and industry linked staff with decades of teaching experience between them. Members of the equine team publish their work in internationally renowned journals, and enjoy industry derived research sponsorship from companies. Overall, the Centre of Equine Management and Science offer a unique learning ecosystem which supports and nurtures any career aspirations in the global equine sector.

Real Estate

Employers have a high regard for RAU courses, evidenced by the excellent employability of our graduates who occupy leading positions within the real estate industry in the UK and overseas. These courses embrace the theories, methodologies, and practice of urban and rural property investment, development, and management. The BSc (Hons) Real Estate degree is accredited by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

Academic staff are fully qualified members of the RICS, and hold teaching qualifications in higher education. Experts in their fields, they offer extensive professional and academic experience and knowledge of current issues and policy. Sessions are regularly organized with high profile speakers, who are drawn from the University's national and global network of real estate professionals.

Rural Land Management

The RAU has a long history and enviable reputation as a supplier of education and training of rural land and property professionals. The ways in which the rural, agricultural, residential, commercial, and leisure elements of land and the associated property are managed has a major impact on the quality of our lives and the environment, as pressure of demand on land use intensifies at both global and local levels.

The RAU course embraces the theories, methodologies, and practice of rural land management, providing a clear understanding of the multi-functionality of land in the UK. The partnership between the University and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has its roots in the accreditation of our course since the 1930s. The University is proud of the substantial contribution made to the development of the global surveying profession by its alumni and staff.

Students benefit directly from the close association with employers and the rural land management profession and graduates follow a range of career pathways.

The Rural Innovation Centre

The RAU Rural Innovation Centre is an important development for the agricultural sector. It enables the sharing of cutting-edge knowledge between those involved in agricultural production and those undertaking applied research. The Centre is based at the University's Harnhill Manor farm, which totals 491 hectares and offers very different farming system situations, allowing for a wide variety of on-farm research trials, bridging the gap between the laboratory and the farmer. The Centre encompasses teaching, training and event rooms, a laboratory research workshop, a machinery workshop and a demonstration hall, and it has extensive external training capacity.

Alongside the sharing of scientific research, the University now delivers its vocational rural skills training from the Rural Innovation Centre. The University is a well-established provider of professional rural training to both the public and private sector, with courses delivered to organisations from the Environment Agency, Natural England, and the Wildlife Trust, to local councils, schools, farmers and agronomy companies.

Research and Knowledge Exchange

The RAU engages in applied, near-market research across a range of key land-based subject areas. From sustainable bi-cropping, to smart-city urban development, rural land policy, sustainable soil management and equine nutrition and behaviour, staff work closely with industry solving real-life problems.

Active commercial research projects dove-tail with innovative problem solving so many of our research students tackle interesting industry relevant questions. Our research mission at RAU is to engage in applied and near-market research and knowledge exchange activities relevant to the land-based sector. To forward this mission we work at the interface of research and end-user, supporting decision making and translating good practices into innovative products and practices that have real impact.

The research community at RAU is small and so research degrees are validated by the University of Gloucestershire. This gives staff and students access to a range of expertise and courses that help develop student's skills and our portfolio of research. Research collaborations are encouraged and we are involved with projects at the University of Oxford, the Countryside and Community Research Institute at Gloucestershire, the University of Nottingham, University College Dublin, University of Aberystwyth and Rothamsted Research in Devon.

Farm491

Farm491, funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), offers space for innovators to grow their businesses by applying technology into agriculture. As well as providing high-spec facilities created to foster entrepreneurship, ideas generation, and collaboration - it includes 491 hectares of Cotswold farmland for research and testing. Farm491 offers start up space both at the RAU's main campus in Cirencester (the new building will be completed in 2018) and at the farm-based Innovation Centre at Harnhill: affordable and flexible co-working environments where budding agri-tech entrepreneurs can run and grow their businesses. This pioneering new initiative creates a vibrant incubation environment with the potential to influence and benefit the wider agricultural and food production industries.

Growth Hub

The Growth Hub will help to grow the Gloucestershire economy by assisting local businesses of all sizes and from all sectors to accelerate their growth and exploit their full potential. The Growth Hub will also build on the RAU's existing areas of expertise by supporting businesses working in agri-technology or based in rural environments across the county. Promoting entrepreneurship and innovation in the area, the Growth Hub will provide personalised support to businesses of all types in the region, from pre-start through to existing companies and organisations looking to grow. It will deliver business development, business support networks, strategy and advisory services, business information and enterprise support. The Growth Hub will form part of an expanding network of Growth Hubs created by Gfirst LEP in strategic locations across the county of Gloucestershire.